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China

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China. Government  
Memorandum on Christian  
Missions...

ANALYSIS  
OF THE  
CIRCULAR OF THE CHINESE  
GOVERNMENT ON MISSIONS.

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THE CIRCULAR WAS COMMUNICATED TO H.M. SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS BY THE FRENCH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES,  
AND PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT  
BY COMMAND OF HER MAJESTY.

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JUNE, 1871.

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Second Edition.

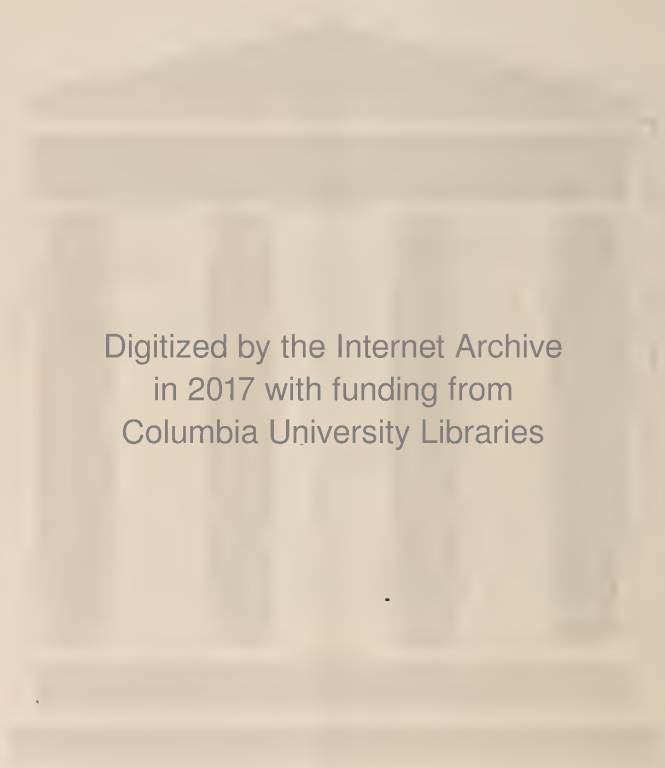


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THE following Papers have been prepared and printed at the request of some of the Secretaries of the Missionary Societies interested in China, for the information of their Committees. They consist of Four Parts :—

1. REMARKS ON THE PREAMBLE.
2. ANALYSIS OF THE EIGHT REGULATIONS.
3. SOME DISTINCTIONS OBSERVABLE IN CHINA BETWEEN  
PROTESTANT AND ROMANIST MISSIONS.
4. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

FOREIGN MISSIONS' COMMITTEE  
OF THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
Queen's Square House, Guilford Street,  
London, W.C.



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*REMARKS on that part of the Chinese Circular  
which forms the Preamble to the Eight Regula-  
tions.*

BY THE REV. A. WILLIAMSON, LL.D.,

Agent for China of the National Bible Society of Scotland.

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THE document is ostensibly addressed to the French Government, and against Roman Catholics, and could we believe that it was aimed only at them, we should have comparatively little interest in exposing it. But the circumstances under which it was issued, the ominous applicability to all missionaries, and, above all, the falsehood, misleading statements, and cunning which pervade the Circular throughout, compel us to question the sincerity of the whole, and force us to believe in ulterior intentions.

To begin with the preamble : It would be too tedious to take it up sentence by sentence. Suffice it to say that the argument may be said to be based on four assertions. The first is, that trade has in no degree occasioned differences between China and the Powers. We presume that the writers refer to the period subsequent to Lord Elgin's treaty, for they surely could never ignore the fact that the first war was originated by the insolence of the mandarins in refusing to acknowledge the equality of Her Majesty's Representatives, and consummated by the seizure of the opium in Canton ; and the second was occasioned by the capture of the "Arrow," which was sailing under the British flag. But even within this limited period the statement is astoundingly untrue. During the Taeping rebellion foreigners supplied the rebels with guns and ammunition. Foreigners,

especially at Hong Kong, have for years been selling guns, rifles, and warlike stores to the pirates which infest the shores. All along, foreign ships have been haunting the coast kidnapping Coolies. Opium has been increasingly embittering the best and most patriotic men in the interior. The seizure of the camphor and the mast dues have occasioned most serious disturbances in Formosa. Her Majesty's marines were fired on at Swatow, and this led to reprisals. The transit dues have been a source of perpetual trouble, and there is, perhaps, not one port from which complaints, often of a most serious character, have not been referred to Peking, and too often without any redress whatever, owing to the facile but fatal forbearance (slackness rather) which is likely to involve us in no end of troubles. Yet the Government say, "Trade has occasioned no difference between China and the Powers."

II. But, further, they say that "missions (*i.e.*, Romanist missions) engender ever-increasing abuses," and so I frankly admit that it is impossible for any honest man to defend the Roman Catholic priests in all their proceedings; but at the same time there is no doubt the charges against them have been grossly exaggerated. And without entering into details I may mention only one fact, which speaks for itself. In all my journeys in North China, Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, as well as in Central China, in former years, I have only once, as far as I can recollect, been taunted with the doings of the priests; whereas in almost every place I have been, opium has been cast in my teeth, and I have been asked, "If you wish to do us good, why do you sell us opium?" And there is an explanation for this remarkable difference: the Roman Catholic communities are only knots of people here and there, sometimes hundreds of miles separate from each other, while there is perhaps hardly a family in China where opium is not a sore, begetting strife and misery to themselves, and hatred to us. Moreover, the flaunted insubordination and misdeeds of the Romanists are comparatively nothing to the masses of the people, while the accursed drug is working the ruin of millions. Yet the Chinese Government say

“trade has occasioned no differences, but the same cannot be said of missions”!

The third point urged in this preamble is the hatred of the people; and they affirm “At this moment the animosity of the people, already deep, degenerates gradually into a hate which at length reaches its paroxysm”; and other sentences to a similar effect. Now, what is the fact? I have never been seriously molested in my journeys, and have felt as safe among the people as I should have done in Scotland or England; and this is the uniform testimony of all who have travelled in China, whether scientific men, merchants, or missionaries, except in certain wild localities in the south. And what will be thought of the veracity of the authors of this Circular, when I say that in every case where the people have risen against foreigners it has been proved that the mandarins and the literati were the instigators of the whole affair? Further, the writers of the despatch repeatedly refer to the Tien-tsin massacre, and hold it up *in terrorem* as an eventuality which is certain to occur again unless their proposals be adopted. And yet it is ascertained beyond all question that the fire-brigades and soldiers who perpetrated that horrible atrocity were *hounded* on by one of the great generals of the empire—a commander-in-chief called Chen-Kwo-jin—and that it was connived at, if not originated and promoted by, the magistrates of that city. Fourthly, the writers of the despatch parade their anxiety to promote peace, also speak of the zeal of the Government in punishing the Tien-tsin murderers, and “arranging the affair, while the truth is, they paid a large monetary compensation to the families of the men who were executed, permitted them to be feasted during the preceding night, afterwards decapitated in grand robes said to be a present from the Government, and buried with honours; and then the two chief mandarins, who were to be banished to Manchuria, were allowed to return to their own homes, while the greatest criminal of all, the general who urged the rabble on, was never touched at all, and is believed to be at present superintending the fortifications of the Takoo forts.

## ANALYSIS OF THE EIGHT ARTICLES

*so far as they bear on Protestant Missions.*

BY THE REV. CARSTAIRS DOUGLAS, M.A., of Amoy.

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These Articles are so confused as to bewilder the mind of the reader ; and actually have, at first sight, misled many persons who on full examination have realised their dangerous character.

They consist of two parts, namely, various *charges* against Roman Catholic Missions and certain proposed *regulations*.

The charges against the Roman Catholic missions are sometimes particular, sometimes general. And while strictly speaking directed solely against Roman Catholics, they are often calculated to leave an impression unfavourable to *all missions alike*.

How far they may be true of Roman Catholic missions it is not our business in this place to enquire : what we have to remark is that all the particular cases quoted are from Roman Catholic missions, and that the general statements are not applicable to Protestant work in China.

The *regulations* proposed are partly mere *truisms*, such as no one has denied ; partly principles and rules *already in force*, according to the treaty, at least in the case of Protestants, and which, if simply put in practice in the case of Roman Catholic missions (which the Chinese have a full right to do at present), would be amply sufficient to punish or prevent the bad practices alleged.

But to a very large extent the proposed regulations are directly opposed to the treaties, and fitted to act in a most ruinous manner against all missions—Protestant as well as Roman Catholic.

There may perhaps be a few useful suggestions in the Circular, but they are so mixed up with erroneous and injurious elements



that it would be very dangerous to make them the basis of any positive rules of binding authority.

I shall now quote in order those clauses of each Article which are most clearly opposed to the existing Treaty, and most hurtful if applied to Protestant missions.

#### ARTICLE I.

“ It would be a good thing to abolish the foreign orphanages,” or “ only the children of necessitous Christians should be received.”

NOTE.—Protestants have no orphanages.

But this Article might injuriously affect boarding-schools.

#### ARTICLE II.

“ Women ought no longer to enter the Churches : nor should Sisters of Charity live in China to teach religion.” “ There ought to be a kind of line of separation which cannot be overstepped.”

NOTE.—Among the Chinese themselves no such impassable line exists, except in theory or among the higher classes.

Men and women together frequent temples, plays, processions, funerals, courts of justice, shops and markets ; travel together on roads, and in boats, large and small, by day and night ; converse in streets, villages, and farms ; work together in fields and other places.

Why should churches be excepted ?

Yet in deference to the sentiment, and to avoid all appearance of evil, it is usual in Protestant chapels to screen off a separate place for the women, where they hear without being seen, and they generally have a separate entrance, when possible.

More than this is impossible.

Protestants have no “ Sisters of Charity,” but the clause might prohibit all female missionaries.

## ARTICLE III.

“The missionaries must conform to the laws and customs of China.” “They are not permitted to place themselves in a kind of exceptional independence.” “The missionaries in foreign countries are subject to the legislation of the country in which they live, and . . . are forbidden to make themselves independent. *Similarly*, the missionaries who teach their religion in China ought to submit themselves to the authority of the magistrates of this country.”

NOTE.—But in China *all foreigners* are by *Treaty* exempted from the authority of the Chinese magistrates and laws, being governed by their own Consuls and Judges, according to their own laws. Even those foreigners who are in *the service* of the Chinese Government (*e.g.*, the Imperial Customs) are so exempted. The reason is the utter badness of Chinese law and government.

If a foreigner in the Interior break the laws, he is liable to be *arrested* by the Mandarins, and sent (without being maltreated) to his Consul to be judged. This condition is printed on all British passports in China.

Missionaries *have the same rights* as other foreigners; and they are equally *liable to arrest*, and this would have been the proper course, if Roman Catholic priests acted as alleged.

It will not do to take away from missionaries the rights which other foreigners possess.

ARTICLE III. (*Continued*).—“They are not permitted to asperse the doctrine of Confucius.”

NOTE.—The French “*dénigrer*” is a much *weaker* word than “*asperse*,” which makes the prohibition all the *stronger*.

Perhaps the same is alluded to in the clause, “China honours the religion of Confucius. That of Bouddha

and of 'Tao, as well as the doctrine of the Lamas, is also professed there. Therefore it is contrary to usage that the latter, although they may not be Chinese, should ignore the decisions of the Chinese authorities, by approving or blaming them." The literal sense is about the "Lamas," but it is probably applicable to missionaries, too.

Missionaries avoid, as far as possible, what would give offence, especially as by far the greater part of the Confucian teaching is good morality, which is a powerful auxiliary to Christianity.

But the clause might prohibit our pointing out any of its *errors* (even when quoted against us) or supplying its defects.

For instance, it is quite against Confucius to assert that Queen Victoria is equal to the Emperor of China, or to assert that *all men are sinners*, &c. Again, Buddhism and Mohammedanism are at least as much opposed to Confucius as Christianity is, and yet are fully tolerated.

*Some other clauses* of this Article will be cited and commented on in connection with related clauses in Article IV.

#### ARTICLE IV.

"Punishment once inflicted, they (foreigners) must not come and claim *indemnities*, and above all they must not seek the *soi-disant abettor* of the crime, to exact from him a certain sum." "The individuals who commit disorders ordinarily belong to the lowest class of the people. When they are guilty of some crime, they are seized and punished; but accusations ought not to be brought against the literates, to exact from them large indemnities." This seems also referred to in Article III., where missionaries "are forbidden to injure the reputation of men (*des gens*)," and "to attack the character of people." (These two clauses are *identical* in the French.)

NOTE.—In the beginning of Article IV. the mask has been incautiously thrown off. It is *all foreigners* (not merely missionaries) who are forbidden to ask damages, or to demand the punishment of abettors (*fauteurs*) or instigators.

But in Chinese law the guilt of abettors and instigators is fully recognised, and in the Chinese courts damages or indemnities are constantly awarded along with other punishments, so as to deter from crime in future.

Compare the Bill for the Prevention of Crime in Ireland.

The literati and mandarins have been clearly proved to be the *real criminals* in almost every outrage against foreigners. Bravos, and starving men are easily hired, and the ignorant people easily deluded, to do any crimes, and they can even be led to submit to punishment as substitutes.

Unless *instigators* be severely punished, there is no safety for any *foreigners*.

ARTICLE IV. (*continued*). “If a Christian conducts himself altogether contrary to the laws, the local authority takes evidence ; and if some one accuses the Christian, the latter is seized and judged. But the missionaries must not then come forward to defend him or to exculpate him.”

Similar cases seem alluded to in Art. III. “In the case in which missionaries allow themselves to be mixed up in affairs beyond their province.” Also where Christians are forbidden to “invoke the intervention of the missionaries.”

NOTE.—No Protestant missionary would wish to defend a bad Christian who *has committed* crimes. But if missionaries be absolutely forbidden to make any representation (public or private) in behalf of Christians *accused of crime*, this would hand over all Christians quite helpless to persecution by false accusations and false witnesses : for the heathen relatives of converts do not

generally take such interest in them as to brave the dangers of a Mandarin's court for their sake. Even if not condemned, long years of hopeless imprisonment and severe beating under *examination* would be common. We would on no account wish to be *authorised* to make such representations ; but we ought not to be *absolutely forbidden*.

Of course the burden of proof would lie on the missionary, not only to show the *fact* of persecution, but also to show that the case was so urgent, or so hopeless, if left to other means, as to justify the exceptional and extraordinary means employed.

How would it do if the servants, employés, landlords, and customers of merchants, or the innkeepers, boatmen, coolies, &c., with whom scientific or commercial travellers have intercourse, were allowed to be imprisoned and punished for their connection with foreigners, while foreigners were forbidden to make any representations on their behalf ? Yet they are as much Chinese subjects as the converts.

#### ARTICLE V.

“ Passports will not be granted in the provinces where there are rebels, nor even hereafter for those where the Imperial army is operating.”

NOTE.—Passports are not now given, or are given with special restrictions, when rebels are near. And all British passports are at once cancelled if the bearer visits a place occupied by rebels. This is enough.

During the last ten years scarcely any one of the Provinces where the Treaty Ports stand has been long quite free of rebels or similar disturbances, so that missionaries (and, of course, all foreigners) would generally have been shut up in the Treaty Ports themselves.

A Chinese province is equal in size to a great European kingdom. Probably about half the provinces have usually some corner disturbed.

Even if there be no rebels in the province, if the Imperial Army use the province to "operate" on another, no passports to be given.

Very few places left.

#### ARTICLE VI.

"The aim of the missionaries being to exhort men to virtue, it is befitting that before admitting an individual to the privileges of religion, he should be examined as to whether he has undergone any sentence or committed any crime. If the examination be in his favour he may become a Christian; if the contrary he should not be allowed to become one. One ought, moreover, to act as the ministers of our religion do, who give notice to the Inspectors of the Ten Families, and cause the name of the person to be entered in the register with this purpose. In the same way the missionaries ought to give notice to the authorities, who will take note of the day of the month and of the year of admittance, of the country and of the station in life of the individual, and will ascertain if he has ever undergone any sentence, or if he has ever changed his name. By acting thus all confusion will be avoided. If a Christian should be sent on a mission, and he should die on the way, notice should be given to the proper authority. If, after being converted, a person commits some crime, he should be dismissed and no longer regarded as belonging to the religion. Every month, or at least every three months, the authorities ought to be informed of the number of conversions. The authorities, also, should act as they do in regard to our temples, that is to say, they should go every month, or at least every three months, to inspect the missions. This course will do no harm to religion, but, on the contrary, will ensure tranquillity."

NOTE.—*This Article seems to provide for excluding bad characters from the Church.*



It really provides that no man can become a Christian till a mandarin has examined him, and has given special permission. If it be even *asserted* that he has committed a crime or changed his name, he cannot be baptised. In the same way a mandarin can at pleasure command a man's excommunication.

No Church can possibly submit to this. Missionaries will endeavour to keep out bad characters and have far more interest to do so than any one else, but cannot be responsible for this to any magistrates.

If a nominal Christian commit a crime, he is just as liable to be seized and punished as a heathen. We claim no civil privileges for our converts.

If a bad man repent and reform he must be admitted to the Church. The great work of the Church is "to call sinners to repentance," yet this article would forbid it.

The *registration* proposed is intolerable. There is no such thing in China for other religions. The clause about "the ministers of our religion" is incomprehensible, unless it refers to Buddhist priests, who, being under a vow of celibacy, have no parallel in Protestant missions.

The alleged inspection of temples does not exist, or if it ever takes place, we have not been able to find any trace of it.

Intolerable that every Christian on entering the Church should pass through an inquisitorial trial and examination of all his past life, and ever after be under severe police surveillance and espionage, worse than a ticket-of-leave convict.

Would make the Christians like a separate state, having different laws from others.

Mandarins have an unquestionable right to visit the churches at any time they please, *without any new regulations*. But formal visits at stated times under fixed regulations would intimidate people from becoming Christians.

## ARTICLE VII.

“The missionaries ought to observe Chinese customs, and to deviate from them in no respect.”

NOTE.—Liable to be interpreted so as to compel compliance with the most minute and vexatious details.

ARTICLE VII. (*Continued*).—“When the missionaries visit a great mandarin they must observe the same ceremonies as those exacted from the literates. If they visit a Mandarin of inferior rank they must also conform to the customary ceremonies.”

This would often include kneeling on both knees, prostration on the ground, and knocking the forehead on the ground, besides other degrading and burdensome ceremonies.

We ask to have to act exactly as other foreigners do.

If missionaries had to perform degrading ceremonies, how could the Chinese respect any foreigners? For *teachers* are among them the most honourable class of the people.

## ARTICLE VIII,

After one of the usual statements of general principles which *no one* denies, professes to treat next of the manner in which *missionaries* are to act when they “wish to buy land” or “hire a house.” “If the missionaries wish to buy a portion of land on which to build a church, or hire a house in which to take up their residence, they must, before concluding the bargain, go with the real proprietor and make a declaration to the local authority, who will examine whether the Fung-Shouy\* presents any obstacle. If the official decides that no inconvenience arises for the Fung-Shouy, it will then be necessary to ask the consent of the inhabitants of the place. These two formalities fulfilled, it will be necessary besides, in the text of the contract, to follow the ruling published in the fourth year of the reign of Tong-tche—that is to say, to declare that the land belongs with full rights to Chinese Christians.”

\* In the Parliamentary paper misprinted Tung.



NOTE.—Unhappily there is a want of coherence between the beginning and the end of the paragraph: for it is evidently implied that however much the missionaries may “wish to buy or rent,” they are not allowed to do so, as it is clearly stated at last that “it will be necessary in the text of the contract to declare that the land belongs with full rights to *Chinese Christians*.”

The only effect of naming the *missionaries* is to seem to raise a *false issue*, as if foreigners were the purchasers, and so to load “the Chinese Christians” with disabilities that are opposed to the Treaty and extremely oppressive. For, by treaty, Christians and non-Christians are to be treated with *perfect equality*; but non-Christians do not need (1) before concluding the bargain to make a declaration to a mandarin, nor (2) to have the Fung-Shouy pronounced good, nor (3) to get the consent of the inhabitants. It is, therefore, a breach of treaty to impose these disabilities on the Christians.

ARTICLE VIII. (*Continued*).—(1.) “They must before concluding the bargain go with the real proprietor and make a declaration to the local authority.”

NOTE.—But among those who are not Christians no such formality is necessary. Sometimes, after a *sale*, the purchaser is required to register; but that is *after the bargain* is concluded, not before it.

While in the case of a *lease* such a declaration or registration is quite unheard of.

ARTICLE VIII. (*Continued*).—(2.) “The FUNG-SHOUY must be ascertained to be favourable.”

NOTE.—This is a modern superstition unknown to the classics, and even discountenanced by Imperial authority.

It is the most convenient and invariable plea to put a stop to proposals for railways, telegraphs, mines, good roads, hongs, or dwellings with upper storeys, and all such improvements.

It has never before been sanctioned by foreign Governments. Let this clause be sanctioned now, and all these foreign improvements are shut out for ever.

ARTICLE VIII. (*Continued*).—*The inhabitants* have to be consulted.

NOTE.—So that one ill-disposed person could at any time get up opposition. And though *no one had any objection* yet many would certainly *make* objections simply for the purpose of getting money for giving up the opposition. This may seem incredible; but I appeal for evidence to anyone who knows China.

The effect of these three regulations would be simply to make it impossible to buy or lease at all whenever *any one* inhabitant or mandarin should wish to prevent it.

Perhaps it may be objected that this article is pointed solely against the buying or renting of ground or houses by "*missionaries*." But any one who knows China will see that, if once enacted, it would be liable to be applied by the local mandarins to *any case of native Christians* buying or renting any place for religious purposes. For it could always be plausibly asserted that this was done in accordance with the "*wish*" of the missionaries for a "*chapel*" or occasional "*residence*."

This clause would seem also to take away the right which missionaries have by treaty (the same as all foreigners) to buy or lease with perfect freedom at and near the Treaty Ports.

ARTICLE VIII. (*Continued*).—"It will not be allowed in the

purchase of properties, to make a transfer making use of another name than that of the real purchaser."

NOTE.—If to prevent a secret sale through a third party, it is quite right.

In another view it seems to forbid the very thing provided for in the preceding clause—namely, the purchase of a site or a house by poor Christians, through the pecuniary assistance of others, whether foreigners or Chinese.

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NOTE.—There are many other clauses in these Eight Articles which are so ambiguous that they might be construed to apply very injuriously.

For instance, in Article III., it is very properly stated that Christians are not required to pay for "the expenses of theatrical solemnities and the worship of local protecting divinities"; but this exemption is stated in such an exceptional manner that it might almost seem to imply that they are liable for other idolatrous payments; yet, according to the Treaty, as at present interpreted, they are free from all such payments, not only because the matter is covered by the admitted enactment of full toleration and religious equality, but also because all such payments in China are *purely voluntary*, and their forcible collection is illegal.

*SOME POINTS OF DISTINCTION observable in China between the Protestant and Romanist Missions.*

BY THE REV. DR. WILLIAMSON.

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DISTINCTION between Roman Catholic Priests and Protestant Missionaries is very easily discovered and apprehended by the people wherever they have an opportunity of comparing us and our operations. With few exceptions, we retain our foreign dress ; the priests adopt the Chinese costume in all its details. We preach publicly in our chapels and elsewhere ; the priests never do so. We distribute and sell books of all kinds, religious, historical, and scientific ; they abstain from this. We are for the most part married men ; the priests are, of course, celibates. Our schools, of all descriptions, are open to the inspection of the neighbours, who go out and in at pleasure, and so there never has been a breath of evil suspicion in reference to our work in that direction ; whereas the Roman Catholic establishments are generally within high walls and closed to the people. We have educated ladies engaged openly in the tuition of girls and the instruction of the women ; they have nuns, foreign and native, who live in nunneries. We have no confessional, no closeting of men and women. We claim no territorial rule, no magisterial authority, no official rank, and no ex-territoriality to our converts. Our sole object is the diffusion of light, the spread of a higher civilisation with all its blessings ; and above all the proclamation of the Gospel—that message of God to man which is the *only medium of new life* to men and nations, and peace, and hope, and joy, to poor suffering humanity.

## *CONCLUDING REMARKS.*

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DR. WILLIAMSON states that he found the Mandarins in the interior ready to recognise the obligations of the Treaty, and that the present attempt of the Chinese Government to rid themselves of some of these, is due to an apparent readiness of concession on the part of our own Government, along with the discredit which the Chinese thought attached to the missionary cause in this country, as gathered by them from our newspapers.

The Chinese Government wish apparently to take us in detail. They have no just idea of the relative position of the nations of the earth. They know the condition of France, and of the Pope in Rome ; they think they can make out a strong case against the Romanist missions, and their demands, once granted in reference to these, can easily be applied afterwards to Protestant missions, and ultimately to foreigners of all countries.

In regard to the grievances of which they complain, the remedy is simple enough. The French have a Treaty clearly and explicitly framed, and those who have violated it on either side should be punished. The Protestant missionaries strongly object to being separated from the rest of the foreign community and placed under special restrictions ; they claim the same rights as are enjoyed by all other foreigners ; and they believe that a firm adherence to the terms of the present Treaty is the only way to meet the unreasonable demands of this Circular of the Chinese Government.

P.S.—Since the First Edition of this pamphlet was printed, a copy of the Circular to the Swedish Government has been published. It is not the same as that to the French, being more vague ; but it requires to be read with the French Circular as its commentary, as it would be impossible to have different regulations for two churches or two nations.

London, July, 1871.





